

THE LIFE
OF
MR. THOMAS ^EFIRMIN,
LATE CITIZEN OF LONDON,

WRITTEN BY ONE OF HIS MOST INTIMATE ACQUAINTANCE.

WITH
A SERMON,
ON

LUKE X. 36, 37.

PREACHED ON THE OCCASION OF HIS DEATH.

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REACHED OF THE DECISION OF THE DEATH

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THE
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OF

MR. THOMAS FIRMIN.

THE long acquaintance and intimate friendship I had with Mr. FIRMIN, are (I confess) warrantable causes, that so many do expect from me, an account of his (memorable) life. If some other man would answer the public expectation, with more address, as to expression, method, number and value of observations and reflections; in a word, more elegantly; yet I will not be wanting in sincerity or truth.

THOMAS FIRMIN was born at Ipswich in Suffolk, in the month of June, anno 1632, being the son of Henry Firmin, and of Prudence his wife. Henry and Prudence, as they did not overflow with wealth of the world, so neither was their condition low or strait. God gave them the wish of Solomon, *neither poverty nor riches*; but that middle estate and rank, which containeth all that is valuable and desirable in wealth, without the parade, vanity and temptations, that (generally)

adhere to riches. But these two were very considerable in their degree, or place, both as to esteem and plenty; by means of their sobriety, diligence and good conduct, the effects of their piety, they were of the number of those, who were then called "Puritans," by the looser sort of people: who were wont to impute precisianism, or affected puritanism, to such as were more devout, and withal more conscientious, and exemplary, than is ordinary; though in the way of the church of England.

When he was of capable years for it, they put their son (Thomas Firmin) to an apprenticeship in London; under a master who was (by sect or opinion) an arminian, a hearer of Mr. John Goodwyn. Our young man, accompanying his master to the elegant and learned sermons of Mr. Goodwyn, soon exchanged the (harsh) opinions of Calvin, in which he had been educated, for those (more honourable to God, and more accountable to the human reason) of Arminius and the remonstrants. And now it was, that he learned, as was the commendable custom of those times, to write short hand; at which he was so dextrous, that he would take into a book, any sermon that he heard, word for word, as it was spoken by the preacher; if the sermon were not delivered with too much precipitance. Of this he made a double use, both then, and in the very busiest part of his

his life. For, if the sermon was considerable, for (judicious) morality, or weighty arguments, he often read it, in his short-hand notes, for his own further improvement : and then took the pains to write it out (in words at length) for the benefit of his acquaintance. He left behind him a great many little books of that kind ; sermons copied fair from his short-hand notes, which, not seldom, are “ multum in parvo.”

As to his demeanor in his apprenticeship ; he was so nimble in his motions, in taking down, opening goods to chapmen, &c. that some gave him the name of “ Spirit.” And in making his bargain, his words and address were so pleasing, and respectful, that after some time, the customers rather chose to deal with Thomas, than with the master of the shop : or if a bargain was struck between a customer and his master, he would decide the difference to the liking of both.

He met, however, with one rub, in the course of his service ; for the elder apprentice purloined five pounds of his master's money, and laid it to the charge of Tom. Firmin. I know not whether the imputation was believed, probably it was not ; but it pleased God himself to judge in this case. For the elder servant was, shortly after, taken with a mortal sickness ; and, before he died, made confession, that he took and spent his master's money, Thomas Firmin not being in the least privy to it. Thus he that made all things,

the very least, does not disdain or neglect to judge all things, even little things, in the properest time. Many crimes are suffered to rest, or are not presently called to judgment: because the delay of justice ordinarily hurts no body; but, when the innocent and virtuous lie under imputations, by occasion of the guilt of others, the detection of offenders, and the execution of wrath, are but seldom (if ever) respited.

So soon as he was made free, he began to trade for himself, though his first stock was but about one hundred pounds. By the opinion he had raised of himself among the merchants and others, and the love he had gained among his master's customers, the neighbourhood, and a great number of incidental acquaintance, he overcame the difficulties of so weak and incompetent a beginning; so that in the year 1660, he married a citizen's daughter, with five hundred pounds to her portion.

From his first setting up (as they speak) for himself, he would be acquainted with all persons that seemed to be worthy, foreigners as well as english, more especially ministers: he seldom dined without some such at his table; which, though somewhat chargeable to his (then) slender abilities, was of great use to him afterwards, both in relation to the poor and the public. For out of his large acquaintance and multitude of friends, he engaged the (powerful) interest of some, and the (weighty) purses of others, in some of those
great

great designs of charity, or other services to the public, for which I shall hereafter account.

Now also it was, that he happened to become acquainted with Mr. Biddle, who much confirmed him in his arminian tenets, and carried him a great deal further. Mr. Biddle persuaded him, that the unity of God is a unity of *person* as well as of *nature*; that the holy spirit* is indeed a *person*, but not *God*. He had a great and just esteem of Mr. Biddle's piety, exemplariness and learning; and is that friend (mentioned in Mr. Biddle's life) who gave Mr. Biddle his bed and board, till he was sent prisoner by protector Oliver Cromwell to the isle of Scilly; and when there, Mr. Firmin, with another friend, procured for him a yearly pension of one hundred crowns from the protector, besides what he obtained from other friends, or gave himself.

Mr. Firmin's diversion, in this part of his life, was gardening; for which purpose he cultivated a piece of ground at Hoxton, not a mile from London; where he raised flowers, and (in time) attained no small skill in the art of gardening, in the culture of flowers, herbs, greens, and fruit-trees of all sorts. I have often borne him company to his garden; but, either going or coming back, he used often to visit the poor and sick.

* [The personality of the holy spirit is renounced by unitarian christians; and by *the spirit of God*, is very generally understood, *the power of God*, or God himself.]

It was one of Mr. Biddle's lessons, that it is a duty not only to relieve, but to visit the sick and poor; because they are hereby encouraged and comforted, and we informed of what nature and degree their straits are, and that some are more worthy of assistance than others; and their condition being known, sometimes we are able to assist them by our counsel, or our interest, much more effectually than by the charity we do, or can bestow upon, them.

Before I pass to the next scene of Mr. Firmin's life, I am obliged to take notice, that by his first wife he had a son and a daughter; the former lived to man's estate, but died (a bachelor) about seven years before his father. The mother of these two children died while Mr. Firmin was (occasionally) at Cambridge, managing there some affairs of his trade. Her death was accompanied with this remarkable circumstance. Mr. Firmin dreamed at Cambridge, that he saw his wife breathing her last: whereupon, early in the morning, he took horse for London; but, on the way thither, he met the messenger who was sent to give him notice of her decease.

Another (necessary) remark belonging to this part of his life is, that though hitherto his wealth was no more than a competence, considering his liberal humour, and the multitude of his acquaintance; yet he was even then a most kind brother, uncle, and kinsman. The reader may take account
of

of this in the following transcript, being the copy of a paper written by one of his nearest relations, and who hath lived with him above thirty years, and was (a great part of that time) his partner, and also a person of great sobriety, diligence, integrity and prudence. “ He had many
 “ relations, of several degrees, who stood in need
 “ of his care and help; to whom he was a very
 “ kind brother, uncle, and kinsman; besides the
 “ great pains he took to promote them, as it lay
 “ in his way or power. His loss by some of them,
 “ for whom he advanced money, and his disburse-
 “ ments for others of them, amounted to very
 “ considerable sums; a good part of which was
 “ not long after his first beginning in the world.
 “ This was the greater prejudice to him, be-
 “ cause then his own circumstances required
 “ money to carry on his trade with ease and
 “ advantage; for he had then more occasion
 “ for his money, than when he was arrived to a
 “ very considerable estate, which he did not till
 “ about seventeen years before his death. His
 “ estate at (about) seventeen years before his
 “ decease, was *three times greater than when he*
 “ *died*, though then considerable. He might
 “ easily have increased it, as much as he dimi-
 “ nished it, had he set his heart on riches; but
 “ those he never valued in comparison of doing
 “ good: and I have often heard him say, *he would*
 “ *not die worth more than five thousand pounds.*”

Of his liberalities to the poor, and the deserving, and the motives to them, I may say enough hereafter. But for his beneficence to his kindred, it proceeded not merely from the benignity of his nature, or natural affection; which (however) to cherish and improve is a great virtue; but from his reverence to the christian religion. For as he would frequently say, that passage of St. Paul to Timothy is to be read as it stands in the margin of our bibles, "He that provides not for his own KINDRED, is worse than an infidel!" so he was wont to give that text as the reason of his bounties to his relations. So far was he from that deism, of which some have been so over-forward to suspect him.

During the imprisonment of Mr. Biddle in the isle of Scilly, Mr. Firmin was settled in Lombard-street, where first Mr. Jacomb, then Dr. Outram, was minister: with these two, being excellent preachers, and learned men, he maintained a respectful and kind friendship; which was answered as affectionately and cordially on their parts. Now also he grew into intimacy with Dr. Whichcote, Dr. Worthington, Dr. Wilkins, Mr. Tillotson: Dr. Wilkins was afterwards bishop of Chester, Mr. Tillotson (for he was not yet made doctor) archbishop of Canterbury; but in their dignity, and to the very last, Mr. Firmin had the same place and degree in their esteem and friendship, that

that at any time formerly he had. While Dr. Tillotson preached the Tuesday's lecture at St. Lawrence, (so much frequented by all the divines of the town, and by a great many persons of quality and distinction) when the doctor was obliged to be at Canterbury, where he was dean, or was out of town, either for diversion or health, he generally left it to Mr. Firmin to provide preachers for his lecture, and Mr. Firmin never failed to supply his place with some very eminent preacher; so that there never was any complaint on the account of Dr. Tillotson's absence. And this Mr. Firmin could easily do, for now there was hardly a divine of note (whether in London, or, in the country, that frequented London) but Mr. Firmin was become acquainted with him. This helped him much to serve the interests of many (hopeful) young preachers and scholars; candidates for lectures, schools, cures, or rectories; for whom he would solicit with as much affection and diligence as other men do for their sons, or near relations.

See here a trader, (who knew no latin or greek, no logic or philosophy) compassed about by an incredible number of learned friends, who differed so widely in opinion from him, and were continually attacking him for his (supposed) errors; yet could they never remove him from the belief of the UNITY OF GOD, nor did their importunities,
or

or his resistance, break off (or so much as lessen) the friendship between them; certain arguments of the extraordinary wit and good address of our friend.

Her late majesty (queen Mary) of most happy memory, having heard much of Mr. Firmin's usefulness in all public designs, especially those of charity; and that he was heterodox in the articles of the trinity, the divinity of our saviour, and the satisfaction; she spoke to archbishop Tillotson, and earnestly recommended it to him, to set Mr. Firmin right in those weighty and necessary points. The archbishop answered, that he had often endeavoured it; but Mr. Firmin having so early and long imbibed the socinian doctrine, was not now capable of a contrary impression. However, his grace published his sermons (formerly preached at St. Lawrence's) concerning those questions, and sent Mr. Firmin one of the first copies from the press. Mr. Firmin, not convinced by his grace's reasonings, or his arguments from holy scripture, caused a very respectful answer (although some have stretched one expression too far), entitled, *Considerations on the explications and defences of the doctrine of the trinity*, to be drawn up and published, himself giving to his grace a copy of it*. I

* [See third volume of *Unitarian tracts*, 4to. 1694.]

must not omit to do the archbishop justice against those who pretend, that the archbishop, notwithstanding those sermons, was in his heart an unitarian. For Mr. Firmin himself told me, shortly after the archbishop had published those sermons, that going to Lambeth, and the archbishop happening to dine in private, he sent for Mr. Firmin to him, and said to this effect, "that the calumnies of people had obliged him to publish his sermons, some time since preached at St. Lawrence's against the tenets of Socinus; that he had sincerely preached as he then thought, and continued still to think, of those points; that, however, nobody's false imputations should provoke him to give ill language to persons who dissented conscientiously, and for weighty reasons. That he knew well this was the case of the Socinians, for whose learning and dexterity he should always have a respect, as well as for their sincerity and exemplariness." Afterwards, when Mr. Firmin gave him a copy of *The Considerations*; after he had read it, he only said, "My lord of Sarum shall humble your writers." Nor did he afterwards, at any time, express the least coldness on the account of the answer made to him, but used Mr. Firmin as formerly, inquiring, as he was wont, "*How does my son Giles?*" for so he called Mr. Firmin's son, by his second wife.

About the time the (great and good) archbishop died, the controversy concerning the trinity, and the depending questions, received an unexpected turn. The unitarians took notice, from D. Petavius, Dr. R. Cudworth, S. Curcellæus, the Oxford heads, Dr. S——th and others, that their opposers agreed indeed in contending for a trinity of divine persons, but differed from one another, even as much as from the unitarians, concerning what is to be meant by the term *persons*. Some of them say, three divine *persons* are three (eternal, infinite) *minds, spirits, substances* and *beings*; but others reject this as heresy, blasphemy, and tritheism. These latter affirm, that GOD is *one* (infinite, eternal, all-perfect) *mind and spirit*; and the trinity of *persons* is the godhead, divine essence, or divine substance, considered as *unbegotten, begotten, and proceeding*: which *modes* or *properties* they (further) explain by *original wisdom, unbegotten, and therefore named "the father;"* the *reflex wisdom, logos, or word, which being generated or begotten, is called "the son;"* and the eternal spiration of *divine love, that has therefore the name of "holy spirit."* The unitarians never intended to oppose any other trinity, but a trinity of (infinite) *minds* or *spirits*; grant to them, that GOD is one infinite spirit or mind, not two or three, they demand no more. They applied them-

selves,

selves, therefore, to inquire, which of these tri-
 nities, a trinity of *spirits* or of *properties*, is the
 doctrine of the catholic church. They could not
 miss of a ready satisfaction. All systems, cate-
 chisms, books of controversy, councils, writers
 that have been esteemed catholic, more especially
 since the (general) Lateran council, anno 1215,
 and the reformation, have defined God to be *one*
infinite all-perfect spirit; and the divine *persons*
 to be nothing else, but the divine essence or god-
 head, with the three *relative properties*, unbegot-
 ten, and begotten, and proceeding. They saw,
 therefore, plainly, that the difference between the
 church and the unitarians had arisen from a mere
 mistake of one another's meaning: a mistake oc-
 casioned (chiefly) by the unscriptural terms *tri-*
nity, *persons*, and such like. They resolved, that
 it became them, as good christians, to seek the
 peace of the catholic church, and not to litigate
 about terms (though never so improper, or imply-
 ing only trifles,) when the things intended by
 those terms are not unsound or heterodox. These
 (honest, pacific) inclinations of men, who had
 no design in their dissent from the church, gave
 birth to "*The agreement between the unitarians*
and the catholic church;" a book written at the
 instance (chiefly) of Mr. Firmin, in answer to
 Mr. Edwards, the bishops of Worcester, Sarum,
 and Chichester, and monsieur de Luzanzy. I

need not to say, what will be owned by every (ingenuous) learned person, without hesitation, that *The Agreement* is as well the doctrine of the catholic church, as of the unitarians; and that in all the points, so long and fiercely debated and controverted by the writers of this and former ages. It must be confessed, the hands of a great many excellent persons did concur to this re-union of parties, that seemed so widely and unreconcilably divided, and did encourage the author of *The Agreement* in his (disinterested, laborious) searches into antiquity, and other parts of learning; and several learned men, some of them authors in the socinian (or unitarian) way, examined the work with the candour and ingenuity that are as necessary, in such cases, as learning or judgment are: Mr. Firmin published it, when examined and corrected, with more satisfaction than he had before given in different controversial writings. I did not wonder, however, that our friend was so ready to embrace a reconciliation with the church: for he was ever a lover of peace, and always *conformed as far as he could*, according to that direction of the apostle, *Whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule.* Which with the best interpreters he understood thus:

“ Conform to the doctrines, terms and usages,
 “ that are commonly received, as far as you can;
 “ if, in some things, you differ from the church,
 “ yet

" yet agree with her, and walk by her rule, to
 " the utmost that in conscience you may; or, as
 " the apostle himself words it, *so far as* (or where-
 " unto) *you have attained.*" From this prin-
 ciple it was, that our friend never approved of
 those who separate from the communion of the
 church on the account of ceremonies, habits, form
 government, or other mere circumstantialia of re-
 ligion. He was wont to tell such, that seeing it
 was undeniable they might communicate with the
 church without either sin or scandal, and did com-
 municate on some occasions; it is therefore both
 scandal and sin to separate and divide. With this
 he silenced many, and reclaimed divers*.

In the year 1658, the unitarians were banished
 out of Poland; the occasion was this: Poland had
 been long harassed with most dangerous civil and
 foreign wars, insomuch that at one time there
 were in arms in Poland, Lithuania, and the Ukrain,
 one hundred and fourscore thousand Poles, as many

* [This argument for conformity will not, in the most distant
 degree, apply to those who, believing the proper unity of God,
 shall continue to join in giving religious worship to Jesus Christ,
 the creature of God; or to a trinity of Gods. A practice highly
 reprehensible upon every principle of religion and morals; and
 which, it may reasonably be supposed Mr. Firmin himself
 would have viewed in the same light, had the subject been pre-
 viously discussed, as in our day, or had his temper and habits
 admitted him to think for himself in this respect.]

Tartars, and two hundred thousand Cossacks, besides powerful bodies of Austrians, and Transilvians, who attacked Poland on the west and south. The ravages and desolations committed, and caused, by so many great armies, in a country that has but few fortified places, were inexpressible. Poland, therefore, was reduced to such a feeble and desperate condition, that their king withdrew himself; and the king of Sweden took the advantage of their confusion and low estate, to invade them with forty thousand men, regular troops. He took the cities of Warsaw and Cracow, and with them almost all Poland: he constrained the Poles to take an oath of subjection and allegiance to him; which oath was first submitted unto, and taken, by the roman catholics, then by the protestants, and, not till last of all, by the unitarians. But the swedish king engaging himself in other wars, particularly with Denmark, and in Germany, John Casimire, king of Poland, appeared again; and the Poles generally joining their king, at length drove the Swedes out of Poland: the swedish king found himself obliged to condescend to a (reasonable) peace with king Casimire. As the unitarians were the last that submitted to the obedience of Swedeland, so being bound thereto by an oath, they did not concur with the other Poles in rebelling against him. They considered the swedish king as a fair conqueror, and a protestant

testant prince, and themselves as tied to him by
 oath; therefore, they even opposed, in some places,
 the revolt from him. This was interpreted a
 desertion of their natural prince, and native coun-
 try; and (though all the partakers, with the swedish
 king, were included in the peace made with him)
 was avenged in the very next diet after the peace,
 by a decree and edict, the sum of which was as
 follows: " The toleration granted by the laws,
 " and coronation-oaths of the kings, to dissenters
 " from the church, does not legally extend to the
 " unitarians (whom they called arians, or ana-
 " baptists), this being a new heresy, since the
 " granting that indulgence or toleration; there-
 " fore all unitarians, who within such a limited
 " time will not embrace the roman-catholic reli-
 " gion, shall be banished out of Poland; allow-
 " ing, however, two years (in effect but one) to
 " sell their estates, whether real or personal."
 Hereupon, the unitarians left Poland, and settled,
 some in Transilvania, where divers provinces and
 cities are unitarian; some in ducal Prussia, and
 Brandenburg, where they enjoy like privileges
 with his electoral highness's other subjects; some
 (few) in Holland. These unitarians were (in
 my opinion) unhappy, that they had not a man
 among them who could discern it, and shew them,
 that neither in the article of the trinity, nor of
 the divinity of our saviour, they had any *real* dif-
 ference

ference with the catholic church: and that the terms used by the church, imply nothing that is contrary to the unity of God, as it is held by learned men. Their confession, which they published upon their banishment, ascribes as much to our saviour, as is intended by the catholic terms *incarnation, God-man, God the son, hypostatical* (or personal) *union*, and the rest: therefore, seeing the church will not dismiss those (unscriptural) terms, but (for certain reasons) contents herself to interpret them to a sound sense, it had been well if the polish unitarians had been so dextrous, as to distinguish between an unsound sense, and improper terms; disclaiming only the former, and submitting to the latter*. The unitarian congregations in Poland had many poor persons; therefore the nobility and gentry prayed a contribution for them, from all unitarian churches of foreign parts: and though they knew there were but few unitarian families in England, they sent a letter to us to intreat our help. Mr. Firmin procured for them some assistances from private persons; and, though without a brief, some collections in churches: both these in the year 1662. But I

* [Mr. Firmin's biographer appears to have fallen into the calumny of Mr. Firmin himself on the subject of conformity; which we cannot but greatly disapprove, however we may value his principles of integrity in other respects.]

mention

mention this for the sake of what happened anno 1681, for then king Charles granted a brief for another sort of polonian sufferers, protestants also: these were they who had suffered the unitarians to be banished about twenty years before, when it was in their power to have prevented it, if so much as one of their deputies had protested against it in the diet. They willingly permitted, nay, they promoted, the violation of the liberty of dissenters not twenty years before; and now, weakened by the loss of the whole unitarian interest, it came to their own turns to be the sufferers. They had never lost either country, or liberty, if they had not voted themselves out of both, by their (former) votes against the unitarians. A toleration or liberty of religion, once violated, will soon be disregarded; for break it only in one instance, or party, and you have disannulled the whole reason of it, and all the pleas for it. The malice of any against the English unitarians comes now too late; they less dissent from the church (if they are at all dissenters) than any other denomination of dissenters*: therefore let those dissenters look to it, who have promoted

* [This argument is founded upon the presumption that the church of England is unitarian; but the inconsistency in her doctrines, and the difference between the liberty she claims, and that which she allows, justifies the plea of the unitarian dissenter beyond the possibility of refutation.]

a bill, in name and pretext, against immorality, and blasphemy; in truth and real design against the unitarians. I said king Charles granted a brief for the polonian protestants, who had assisted in banishing the polonian unitarians—This brief Mr. Firmin promoted as much as in him lay: I find he received of nine dissenting congregations, 110l. 16s. 10d. and in another book I find the sum of 568l. 16s. 0½d. collected on the same account.

We are now come to another part of Mr. Firmin's life, his second marriage. In the year 1664. he married a daughter of a justice of peace in the county of Essex, and had with her, besides all the qualifications of a good wife, a considerable portion. God was pleased to give them several children; but one son, Giles Firmin, lived to man's estate. He promised to become an eminent merchant, his father giving him the whole portion he had received with his mother: and the young gentleman going into Portugal, to manage there his own business, he was called by the heavenly father to eternal mercies.

In the year 1665. was a great plague, of which there died in that one year, in London only, near one hundred thousand persons: most of the wealthier citizens removed themselves and children into the country; so did Mr. Firmin, but left a kinsman in his house, with order to relieve some
poor

poor weekly, and to give out stuff to employ them in making such commodities as they were wont. He foresaw that he should be hard put to it, to dispose of such an abundance of commodities as these poor people would work off, in so long time, for him only: but when he returned to London, a wealthy chapman (who was greatly pleased with his adventurous charity) bought an extraordinary quantity of those goods; so that he incurred no loss, at that time, by employing the poor.

The year after the sickness, happened the great fire, by which the city of London sustained the damage of ten millions of pounds sterling. Mr. Firmin, with his neighbours, suffered the loss of his house in Lombard-street, and took (thereupon) a house and warehouse in Leadenhall-street. But now his fine spirit, and generous way of trading, were so well known, that in a few years he so improved his stock, that he rebuilt his house, and built also the whole court (excepting two or three houses) in which he lived. And having now provided sufficiently for himself and family, he began to consider the poor.

His first service to them, or rather to God in their persons, was the building a warehouse by the water-side, for the laying up corn and coals, to be sold to the poor, in scarce and dear times, at moderate and reasonable rates, at the rates they had been purchased, allowing only for loss (if any should

should happen) by damage of the goods while kept.

He went on with his trade in Lombard-street till the year 1676, at which time I estimate he was worth about nine thousand pounds. If we consider, that this estate was raised from a beginning of about one hundred pounds, in an ordinary way of trade, and in about twenty years time; to what a mighty wealth would it have grown, in the hands of such a manager, in his remaining twenty or one and twenty years; had not his native liberality, great mind and zeal of serving the divine majesty, turned his endeavours a contrary way; to support, and to raise others, while he lessened and impaired himself? For in this year he erected his warehouse in Little Britain, for the employment of the poor in the linen manufacture. Let us hear what archbishop Tillotson (then but dean Tillotson) says of this design of Mr. Firmin, in his funeral-sermon on Mr. Gouge, anno 1681. " He (Mr. Gouge) set the poor of St. Sepulchre's parish (where he was minister) to work, " at his own charge. He bought flax and hemp " for them to spin; when spun, he paid them for " their work, and caused it to be wrought into " cloth, which he sold as he could, himself " bearing the whole loss. This was a very wise " and well-chosen way of charity; and in the " good effect of it, a much greater charity, than " if

“ if he had given to those very persons (freely
 “ and for nothing) so much as he made them to
 “ earn by their work : because, by this means he
 “ rescued them from two most dangerous tempta-
 “ tions, idleness and poverty. This course, so
 “ happily devised and begun by Mr. Gouge, gave,
 “ it may be, the first hint to that useful and wor-
 “ thy citizen, Mr. Thomas Firmin, of a much
 “ larger design ; which has been managed by
 “ him some years, in this city, with such vigour
 “ and good success, that many hundreds of poor
 “ children, and others, who lived idle before,
 “ unprofitable both to themselves and the public,
 “ now maintain themselves, and are also some
 “ advantage to the community. By the assistance
 “ and charity of many excellent and well-disposed
 “ persons, Mr. Firmin is enabled to bear the un-
 “ avoidable loss and charge of so vast an under-
 “ taking ; and by his own forward inclination to
 “ charity, and unwearied diligence and activity,
 “ is fitted to sustain and go through the incredible
 “ pains of it.” (Sermon on Mr. Gouge, p. 62,
 63, 64.)

It is of this project and warehouse that Mr.
 Firmin himself speaks, in a book of his, entitled,
Proposals for the employment of the poor, in these
 words : “ It is now above four years since I set
 “ up my workhouse in Little Britain, for the
 “ employment of the poor, in the linen manu-

“ factory; which hath afforded so great help and
 “ relief to many hundreds of poor families, that
 “ I never did, and I fear never shall do, an action
 “ more to my own satisfaction, or to the good
 “ and benefit of the poor.” He employed, in this
 manufacture, sometimes sixteen hundred, some-
 times seventeen hundred spinners, besides dressers
 of flax, weavers, and others.

Because he found that his poor must work six-
 teen hours in the day to earn sixpence, and thought
 that their necessities and labour were not suffici-
 ently supplied, or recompensed, by those earnings;
 therefore, he was wont to distribute charity among
 them, as he saw their need, especially at Christ-
 mas, and in hard weather. Without this charity,
 some of them would have perished for want, when
 either they or their children fell ill. He used also
 to lay in vast quantities of coals, which he gave
 out by a peck at a time: whoever of the spinners
 brought in two pounds of yarn, might take away
 with them a peck of coals, besides what coals
 were given to such as were ancient, had many
 children, or any sick in their family. But, because
 they soiled themselves by carrying away coals in
 their aprons or skirts, he obviated that inconve-
 nience, and damage to them, by giving them can-
 vass bags. Cleanliness contributing much to health,
 he distributed among them shirts and shifts made of
 the coarser and stronger sort of cloth, that had been
 spun

spun by themselves, and he gave the same also among their children. Much of this linen he begged for them; for he found, among his acquaintance and friends, divers charitable persons, who would rather buy the cloth that had been wrought by our home-poor, than purchase it, though at somewhat cheaper rates, from merchants or shops, that sell scarce any except foreign cloth. By the assistance and order of his friends, he gave to men, women, and children, sometimes three thousand shirts and shifts in two years. But still further to encourage and help his poor, he would invite persons of ability to come to his workhouse, on days the spinners brought their yarn, that, seeing their poverty and diligence, he might the more easily persuade them to give, or subscribe, something for their relief. Some would work, but knew not the art of spinning, or were not able to purchase wheels and reels; for these he hired teachers, and freely gave them their reels and wheels. He often took up poor children as they were begging in the streets, whom he caused to be taught at his own charge, and provided for them their reels and wheels, which were never deducted out of their work.

In his book of *proposals* he takes notice that, "In
"above four thousand pounds laid out the last year,
"reckoning house-rent, servants' wages, loss by
"learners, with the interest of the money, there

“ was not above two hundred pounds lost. One
 “ chief reason of which was, the kindness of several
 “ persons, who took off good quantities of commodities at the price they cost me to spin and
 “ weave : and, in particular, the East India and
 “ Guinea companies gave me encouragement to
 “ make their *Allabas* cloths, and coarse canvas for
 “ pepper bags ; which before they bought from
 “ foreign countries.”

He published that book of *proposals* to engage others to set the poor to work, at a public charge, or at least to assist him, and two or three friends, in what he had now carried on, for above five years, at the loss of above one thousand pounds. But, finding that the lord mayor and the aldermen were not persuaded by what he had offered in his book, and by discourse with them, and other wealthy citizens, he began to lessen the spinning trade : for I find that in the year 1682, the whole disbursement was only two thousand three hundred and thirty-seven pounds three shillings, and yet the loss thereby that year was two hundred and fourteen pounds.

It should seem he did not meet with so many charitable persons, who would buy his manufacture at the price it cost him, as in some former years.—Nay, from this time the loss increased yearly upon him. For seven or eight years together he lost two-pence in the shilling, by all the work of his poor ; but he
 was

was contented, for he would say, *Two-pence given them by loss in their work, was twice so much saved to the public, in that it took them off from beggary or theft.* But his loss some years was extraordinary. In the year 1683, the trade increasing again, his own disbursements, besides his friends, were not less than two thousand pounds; the loss for that year was four hundred pounds. Continuing thus, in the year 1684, the balance of loss, not then received, amounted to seven hundred and sixty-three pounds. And in the year 1685 it increased to nine hundred pounds eleven shillings and three-pence; toward which loss, an eminent citizen, who had five hundred pounds in that stock, quitted the whole principal, and required no interest. In the years 1686, 1687, 1688, and 1689, the trade declined for want of more such benefactors. The loss now remaining was four hundred and thirteen pounds, eleven shillings and three-pence; the value of the goods then in hand, and debts standing out being computed at three hundred and seventy-two pounds three shillings and one penny, I find no more in the whole received than two hundred and seventy-nine pounds and one penny, which falling short ninety-three pounds three shillings, added to the former loss of four hundred and thirteen pounds eleven shillings and three-pence, makes five hundred and six pounds fourteen shillings and three-pence. This whole sum I find not any way made

good, but remains due to Mr. Firmin, though never reckoned by him as any part of his estate.

Anno 1690. The design was taken up by *the patentees of the linen manufacture*; who made the poor, and others, whom they employed, to work cheaper; yet that was not sufficient to encourage them to continue the manufacture. The patentees agreed with Mr. Firmin, to give him one hundred pounds a year to oversee and govern their manufacture: but seeing their undertaking had not answered their, or his, expectations, he never received the promised salary, nor discounted it to them; and if he had, he would certainly have given it (in money, linen, and coals) among the spinners. This I venture to say, because when he drew some prizes in one of Mr. Neal's lotteries to the value of one hundred and eighty pounds, he reserved to himself only the money he had adventured: the money gained, he gave partly to some relations, and partly to the poor.

But the poor spinners, being thus deserted, Mr. Firmin returned to them again, and managed that trade as he was wont: but so, that he made it bear almost its own charges. But in order that their smaller wages might be comfortable to them, he was more charitable to them in his distributions, in this than in any former years; and begged for them of almost all persons of rank, with whom he had intimacy, or so much as friendship.

He

He would also carry his cloth to divers persons, with whom he scarce had any acquaintance; telling them, "it was the poor's cloth, which in conscience they ought to buy at the price it could be afforded." If the buyers were very wealthy, he prevailed on them to give some of the cloth they had bought, in shirting; and he would quickly send for the money, that was due for the cloth. But, without these ways, it had been impossible for him, to employ such a multitude of people, who could not stay a minute for their money. This continued to be his chief business and care, to the day of his death: saving that about two years since, when the calling in the clipped money occasioned such a scarcity of current coin, that it was hard with many rich to get money enough to go to market, he was forced to dismiss some of his spinners, for mere want of money to pay them. I heard his partner and kinsman, Mr. James, tell him, that he had taken about seven hundred pounds out of their cash already, for the spinners; and that he should take out no more, as yet. Not that Mr. James was not always an encourager and promoter of the work-house charity; for he never took any interest-money, for his share in that stock: but, their whole common trade going through the hands of Mr. James, and being managed by him, he was more sensible than Mr. Firmin, that more ready money could

not

not be spared to that use, without great disadvantage to their trade.

Flax and tow being goods very combustible, Mr. Firmin was always a little uneasy, lest by some accident, the work-house, being in the keeping only of servants, should take fire: and I remember the boys, in one of their licentious times of throwing squibs, flung one into the work-house cellar, where the tow and flax were stowed; but providence did not permit it should do any hurt.

Before I dismiss this work-house, I must take notice, that at his death, our friend told Dr. L. that he did not regret his dying, only he could have been willing (had God so pleased) to have continued two months longer, to put his work-house and spinners into another method. That method is now settled by Mr. James; and the poor spinners employed as formerly.

Concerning this work-house, and the spinners, Mr. Firmin would often say, that, *To pay or relieve the spinners, with money begged for them, with coals, and shirting, was to him such a pleasure, as magnificent buildings, pleasant walks, well cultivated orchards and gardens, the jollity of music and wine, or the charms of love or study, are to others.* I am persuaded he said no more than the truth; for Mr. James, who was his apprentice, journeyman, and partner, upwards of

of thirty years, gives this account of his uncle's expence on this and other charities ; " Comparing " and balancing, says he, his expences and losses with " his gains, he might have left an estate behind him " of at least twenty thousand pounds, if he had not " given and spent it in public and private charities, " buildings, and other good works ; whereas now " his estate amounts to no more than a sixth part of " that sum." But it was his settled resolution not to be richer : he told me, but a little before he died, that were he now worth forty thousand pounds, he would die but very little richer than he then was. I inclined to think that in such case, he would have died much poorer ; for such a sum would have engaged him in such vast designs for his province, the poor, that (probably) he would have gone beyond the expence he intended at first for them. I have heard his physician blame him sometimes, that he did not allow himself competent time for his dinner ; but hastened to Garraway's coffee-house, about his affairs. But those affairs were seldom, if ever, his own ; he was to solicit for the poor, or in the business of some friend who wanted Mr. Firmin's interest : or he was to meet on some design relating to the public good. In these matters his friends, that were not quick in their dispatches, had reason oftentimes to complain of him, as not giving them sufficient time, to dispatch business with him : for he was nimble

aimble above most men, in apprehension, in speech, judgment, resolution, and action.

He was persuaded by some to make trial of the woollen manufacture; because at this, the poor might make better wages, than at linen work. For this, he took a house in Artillery Lane: but the price of wool advancing very much, and the London spinsters being almost wholly unskilful at drawing a woollen-thread, after a considerable loss by them, and twenty-nine months' trial, he gave up the project.

He laboured with a particular zeal and activity, in redeeming poor debtors out of prison; not only as it was charity to the persons, but out of regard to their (in the mean time) distressed and starved families: he would say, the release of one man out of prison, is a relief bestowed on his whole family. I have sure grounds to believe, that it was himself of whom he spake, in his book of *Proposals*, p. 83. *I know one man, who, in a few years last past, with the charity of some worthy persons, has delivered some hundreds of poor people out of prison; who lay there, either only for jailor's fees, or for very small debts: I have reason to believe that many more have been delivered by others; and yet one shall find the prisons very full of prisoners at this time.*

As he discharged great numbers of prisoners, he took care for the better and easier subsistence
of

of others, while in prison : for he would examine the prisoners, concerning their usage by their keepers ; and sometimes prosecuted jailors, before the judges, for extorting unlawful fees, and other exorbitant practices. I remember, one of the jailors prosecuted by Mr. Firmin, made a rope, and hanged himself before the matter was determined : a strong presumption, that he was conscious to himself, of great faultiness, and a demonstrative proof, of the great need of such prosecutions, and of the virtue of him that undertook them.

He continued these endeavours for poor debtors, from before the year 1681 to his last breath : but being grieved, that he could do nothing for debtors, confined for great sums ; therefore, on behalf of such he always vigorously promoted acts of grace by parliament, whereby insolvent debtors were discharged. Tho' he never was a parliament man, he had mighty interest in both houses ; and was the cause that many bills were quashed, and others passed : insomuch, that once, when an act of grace for poor prisoners, that was liable to have, and had, an ill use made of it by unconscionable or knavish people, passed the houses and royal assent ; he was upbraided with it by some of the creditors, and told that it was his act.

Mr. Firmin was not insensible, that sometimes people come into prisons, or otherwise become
 poor,

poor, more by their own negligence, idleness, riot, and pride, than by mishap and misadventure ; yet he could not join with those, who say here-upon, *they hate the poor ; and that such well deserve the straits, and miseries, that they bring on themselves.* He was wont to answer, to such reasonings, that ; *It would be a miserable world indeed, if the divine providence should act by that rule : if God should show no favour, grant no help, or deliverance to us, in those straits or calamities, that are the effects of our sins. If the universal Lord seeks to reclaim, and to better us, by favours, and graces ; do we dare to argue against the example set by him ; and against a method, without which, no man living may ask any thing of God ?*

There is no place whatsoever, but of necessity it must have divers poor, more especially London : where every house having one or more servants, who are obliged to spend their whole wages in clothes ; when these servants marry, every little mishap in the world reduces them to beggary ; their small, or rather no, beginnings are crushed by every accident. Mr. Firmin had so full a sense of this, that (in some years of his life) he begged about five hundred pounds a year ; which he distributed to the poor, at their houses, or at his own, by the sums of two shillings and six-pence, or five shillings, or ten shillings, or fifteen shillings, as he
saw

law (or was well informed of) the necessities of the persons. The way he took for the better effecting this charitable distribution, was; he would inquire of the most noted persons for honesty and charity, in the several parishes, who were the most necessitous and best deserving poor in that neighbourhood: he went then to their houses, that he might judge farther, by their meagre looks, number of children, sorry furniture, and other circumstances, in what proportion it might be fit to assist them. He always took their names and numbers into a book; and sent a copy of so much of his book, to the persons who had intrusted him with their charity, as answered to the money trusted to him by every such person: that if he so minded, he might make inquiry, by himself or any other, concerning the truth of the account given in. But Mr. Firmin's fidelity grew to be so well known, that after a few years, many of his contributors would not receive his accounts. I know a certain person, whose hand was with Mr. Firmin in all his charities; I should not exceed (I believe) if I said, that in twenty-one years time he hath given by Mr. Firmin's hand, or at his recommendation, five or six thousand pounds: this person hath himself told me, that Mr. Firmin was wont to bring him the accounts of his disbursements, till he was even weary of them, and (because he was so well assured of him) he desired him not to bring

him any more. Sometimes the sums brought, or sent in, to Mr. Firmin, for the poor, were such, as did enable him to spare some part to some whom he knew to be charitably disposed like himself: in that case he would send small sums, such as forty shillings, or three pounds, sometimes more, to those his acquaintance, which sums they were to divide among the poor of their vicinage; whose names and case those friends were to return to him. He hath sent to me, and divers others that I know of, many such sums, in christmas time, in hard weather, and times of scarcity.

In these distributions, Mr. Firmin sometimes considered others, besides the mere poor; particularly the poorer sort of ministers: I doubt not he hath made use of many hands besides mine; but by me he hath sent, (of his own proper motion) divers times the sum of forty shillings, sometimes two guineas, to ministers who were good preachers and exemplary, but whose vicarage, curacy, or lecture was small. I have known that he has sent no less than ten pounds to a clergyman in debt, or oppressed with many children, when he hath been well assured, that the person was a man of probity and merit. He asked me once concerning Mr. P. of Gr. Ch. what sort of man he was? I answered; his mind was much above his purse; he was charitable, curious, learned; a father among young scholars, who were promising men; but

but his living not above eighty or ninety pounds a year. Mr. Firmin said, *I have done considerably for that man.* I answered as I thought myself obliged, *you may take it on my word that your liberality was never better placed.* Afterwards I met the widow of Mr. P. in London; I desired her to accept half a pint of wine at the next tavern. While we were together, I asked her whether there had not been some acquaintance between her husband and Mr. Firmin. She said, the acquaintance was not much; but the friendship great. She said her husband was acquainted with many persons of quality, that he had experienced their liberality through the whole course of his life: because his address, as well as his merit, was so remarkable. She said, that of so many benefactors to Mr. P. Mr. Firmin had done most for him both in life and death. When her husband died, his estate would not pay his debts; she was advised hereupon, by a clergyman, to propose a composition with the creditors: seeing that every one could not be fully paid, yet all of them might receive part of their debt. She consulted Mr. Firmin, by letter, about this; he approved the advice, and was one of the first that subscribed the composition: but withal, sent her a letter, wherein he remitted his whole debt; and desired to see her, when her affair was cleared, and she at quiet. When she came to him, he said, *he had missed in*

his aim, in what he had designed to procure for her, but he would do something himself. Shortly after, he sent her a good Norwich stuff, that very well clothed her and her four children. She told me this, with many tears; to which I had the more regard, because I had long known her to be a virtuous, and a very prudent woman.

As Mr. Firmin's pains, and care, in giving forth these charities, were not small, so neither were they little, in procuring them: not only because many persons are hardly persuaded to give the bread of themselves and families to others; but because it is much more difficult to beg for others, than to give ones self. He that begs for others, must be master of a great deal of prudence, as well as wit, and address: he must know, how to choose the *Mollia tempora fandi*, the fittest opportunity of speaking; and when he speaks, he must apply himself to those passions of the person, by which only he can be wrought on. I remember Mr. Firmin told me, of his applying to a citizen of the highest rank, for his charity in rebuilding St. Thomas's Hospital; of whom he demanded no less than one hundred pounds. The person had been some way disoblinded by the governors of that hospital; so he refused to subscribe any thing: but our friend seeing him one day among some friends whom he respected, and by whom he was willing to be respected; and that also he was in a very good

good humour, he pushed on his request for the hospital, and prevailed with him so far as to subscribe the whole one hundred pounds. But to his personal solicitations, he was forced sometimes to add letters; and sometimes succeeded by the arguments in his letters, better than by the authority of his personal mediation. I find in one of his books, in the year 1679, the sum of five hundred and twenty pounds six shillings, received of seventy-two persons; in a book of the year 1681, the sum of five hundred and thirty-one pounds nineteen shillings and six-pence, received of forty-three persons. All these were to be treated with privately, and opportunely, which required much time, caution, industry, and discretion; and which, laid out on his own business, what great effects would it have produced? Mr. Firmin might, much more easily, have been one of the great men of the world, than almoner general, for the poor and hospitals. I observe in the same book of 1681, that the disbursements against the sum of five hundred and thirty-one pounds nineteen shillings and six-pence, do amount to five hundred and ninety-four pounds fifteen shillings and eleven pence; the balance overpaid is sixty-two pounds fifteen shillings and five-pence; which over-paid balance is to be found in many of his accounts, and I believe it came out of his own purse. I must note also, that the sums were not given for the

poor alone, or for the spinners alone ; but of fifty pounds given, thirty pounds of it is for the spinners, and twenty pounds for the poor ; sometimes twenty for the spinners, and thirty for the poor : elsewhere, one hundred pounds is given, fifty for the poor, and fifty for the spinners ; another gives fifty pounds for cloth, to be divided to the poor ; another one hundred pounds for the same use.

Mr. Firmin having set his heart so much on charity, could not but esteem and love Mr. Gouge, a man of the same spirit : whom while he was in London, he got to table with him. It is not to be doubted, that it was the intimate friendship of these two persons, that gave occasion to that (remarkable) passage in Dr. Tillotson's funeral-sermon on Mr. Gouge, p. 82. " Mr. Gouge was
 " of a disposition ready to embrace and oblige all
 " men ; allowing others to differ from him, even
 " in opinions that were very dear to him. Pro-
 " vided, men did but *fear God and work righte-
 " ousness*, he loved them heartily, how distant so-
 " ever from him in judgment about less necessary
 " things, in which he is worthy to be propounded
 " as an example to men of all persuasions." And
 till the example is followed, the world will never
 have peace.

That great preacher has given us an account of Mr. Gouge's religious charity, in printing divers good books in the Welch and English tongues,

to

to be given to those that were poor, and sold to such as could buy them. The chief of those prints, and the most expensive, was an edition of the bible and liturgy in the Welch tongue; no fewer than eight thousand copies of this work were printed together. One cannot question that Mr. Firmin contributed to, and procured, divers sums for this excellent undertaking of his friend; though all is attributed to Mr. Gouge, who was chief in that great and good work. After Mr. Gouge's death I find the sum of 419l. 9s. given to buy a number of those bibles; whereof Dr. Tillotson, (then Dean of St. Paul's) gave 50l. Mr. Morrice, 67l. other persons the rest: but there wants in the receipts 26l. 13s. to balance the disbursement, and that I judge was Mr. Firmin's money. Now that we are speaking of *books*, I ought not to forget, that Mr. Firmin often printed ten thousand copies of the *Scripture catechism*, which some think was written by Dr. Worthington; but I have cause to believe that the author was Dr. Fowler, now bishop of Gloucester; who in compiling it, followed the method of Dr. Worthington. These Mr. Firmin gave to his spinners and their children, and to the children of the hospital; engaging them to get it by heart, and giving something to those that did. He lodged also great numbers of them with booksellers, at cheaper rates than they were

were printed, that they might be sold also cheaper; and thereby, be dispersed all over England. His acquaintance might, at all times, have of them what numbers they would, *gratis*. He valued this catechism, because it is wholly in the words of scripture, favours no particular party or persuasion, and therefore is of general use: the aim of the judicious author being to instruct the young and the ignorant, in what *all parties agree* is necessary to be believed, and done; leaving it to others to engage them in controversies and debates.

In the year 1680, and 1681, came over the French protestants; these afforded new work for Mr. Firmin's charity and zeal: for of all the objects of charity, he thought those the most deserving, who were undone for conscience toward God; whether such conscience be a well-informed conscience, or an erroneous and mistaken one. It is not the truth or falsehood of the opinion, but the zeal for God, and the sincerity to the dictates of conscience, that makes the martyr. Therefore now our eleemosinary general had to beg, not only for the spinners, the poor of the out parishes of London, the redemption of debtors from prison, for coals and shirting; but for a vast number of religious refugees, whose wants required not only a great, but an immediate, succour. The first, and one of the most difficult cares for them, was, how to provide lodgings for
such

such multitudes, in a city where lodgings are as costly as diet? But Mr. Firmin bethought him of the *Pest-house*, then empty of patients: the motion was approved by the lord mayor and court of aldermen; and some hundreds of these strangers were accommodated in that spacious and convenient place. As for relief in money, they made their first application to the French church: therefore I find in Mr. Firmin's books, *Delivered to the deacons of the French church*, 50l. 10 J. S. 10l. 10 *an old man at Ipswich* 20l. This was immediately upon their coming over. In 1681, and 1682, I find the sum of 2363l. 10s. 1d. issued forth, for the use of the French, through his hands; and in 1683, for the French children at Ware, 443l. 18s. 9d. For their meeting-house at Rye, 20l. I find upon his books these following sums, before a *brief* was granted to them, 100l. then 155l. in the next page 70l. 15s. To answer these receipts, the books say, Sept. 15. *Delivered to Mr. Carbonel, &c. in 16 pieces of cloth*, 50l. Sept. 24. *To the deacons of the Savoy, in cloth*, 20l. Oct. 7. *To Carbonel, &c. in thirty-two pieces of cloth*, 100l. 14s. The balance is 27l. 8s. which (it is likely) was his own money.

In the year 1682, he set up a linen manufacture for the French at Ipswich, to which himself gave 100l. which was all sunk in their service, saving that at last he received 8l. 2s. 6d. He paid also
for

for their meeting-house at Ipswich 13l. In the same year also he disbursed for them for coals 60l. 10s. whereof he received only 20l. 10s. There have been four briefs granted to the French, one by king Charles in 1681; a second by king James in 1686; another by king James in 1687; the fourth by king William in 1693. Besides which king William gave to them 1000l. per month, for thirty-nine months. It was Mr. Firmin that was chiefly concerned in the distribution of all this money; especially of the thirty-nine thousand pounds, which was committed to two bishops, two knights, and a gentleman; but almost the whole distribution was left to Mr. Firmin, sometimes *with*, but more commonly *without* their inspection. I see I have omitted, before I was aware, the following sums, paid to the French protestants at Ipswich, before their brief was collected; 45l. 10s. and 42l. and 45l. 9s. another 42l. to twenty-one families at Ipswich.

He had a principal hand in the special collections, that are now made every winter, about Christmas time, in churches, for the poor in and about London. He was the man that solicited the king's letter for making those collections. He took care of printing and distributing the king's and bishop of London's letters to the several rectors, and other ministers, of churches in London, to be by them read in their respective churches.

He

He waited on the lords of the treasury for the king's part of that charity. And when the money, as well of the king as the parishes, was collected, and paid into the chamber of London, and was then to be divided, among the poor of the several parishes, by my lords the bishop and mayor of London, no man could so well proportion their dividends as Mr. Firmin. This was well known to their lordships, who, therefore, seldom made any alteration in his distributions. In these matters, all the churchwardens made their applications to Mr. Firmin; and, when the dividend was settled, received their warrants from him: for which purpose, the bishop of London would many times intrust him with blanks, and the lord mayor was always ready to give his hand. The whole of this charity was so constantly, and so many years, managed by Mr. Firmin, that, he dying some days before Christmas last, the king's letter, for the collection, was not given till the 12th of January: and when the collection was brought in from the several parishes, they were at a loss for the distribution, and were glad to take direction from Mr. Firmin's pattern.

There hath been occasion, in my last section, to mention the bishop of London, Dr. Henry Compton. I ought not to omit, that Mr. Firmin could never speak of this bishop, without a particular respect and deference. He admired the candour,

dour, moderation, wisdom, and dexterity, accompanied and tempered by caution and vigour, which (said he often) are so eminent in his lordship, and so constantly appear, upon all occasions proper to any of those virtues, that I wish it were as easy to be like, as it is impossible not to esteem him. I return to Mr. Firmin.

During the last twenty-three or twenty-four years of his life, he was one of the governors of Christ-church hospital in London. It is known to every body almost, in London, that Mr. Firmin procured a great number, and very considerable donations to this hospital; but I cannot specify many particulars, because he kept not exact accounts of them; but those that have come to my knowledge, are remarkable. Give me leave to give the reader this account of one of them. The honourable sir Robert Clayton, having had it in his thoughts to make a provision for a mathematical master in that hospital, became the happy proposer, and (by his interest in the then lord treasurer Clifford, and sir Robert Howard) the successful procurer of the establishment of a mathematical school in that hospital, for the constant breeding of the number of forty boys, skilled in the Latin tongue, to a perfect knowledge in the art of navigation. The occasion was this. There was 7000*l.* given to this hospital, by a citizen, (payable out of Weavers-hall) for the main-

maintenance of forty boys. Upon the restoration, the fund, out of which this issued, reverting to the crown, king Charles the second, upon the said proposal and petition to that purpose, was graciously pleased to grant to the hospital the said 7000*l.* to be paid them by 1000*l.* per annum for seven years; upon which the hospital was obliged to maintain the said forty boys, successively to be so educated for ever. Sir Robert Clayton, being greatly pleased that he had been an instrument in so charitable and beneficial a constitution, did afterwards meditate a donation from himself to this hospital, and so to take it into his special care and beneficence. And that which instigated him to these thoughts, was, he had laboured under a very grievous sickness, even to despair of recovery; but it pleased the almighty governor that he did recover; and Mr. Firmin was very instrumental in it, both by his personal ministry, and giving quick notices to physicians of several symptoms. Hereupon sir Robert advised with Mr. Firmin about the building and adding a ward for girls to this hospital, as a testimony of his gratitude to God; and determined that Mr. Firmin should have the management of that affair. Accordingly he went about it, you may be sure, with great alacrity and diligence; but at whose charge he erected this large building was a secret, not known to any of the family but John Morris, esq;

fir Robert's partner in this work also; and perhaps
 to my lady. In this was laid out near 4000*l*.
 but it was not yet finished, when upon occasion
 of the unhappy difference between the passive-
 obedience men and the law-obedience men, the
 former, having the power on their side, turned
 the latter both out of the government of the city
 and of that hospital, among whom fir Robert
 (though eminent) was ejected, together with his
 faithful agent and friend Mr. Firmin, another
 governor, as I have said. Then it was that Mr.
 Firmin broke silence, and upbraided those ex-
 cluding governors with depriving the hospital of
 such a benefactor as the builder of that ward.
 For fir Robert was now alone, Mr. Morris being
 deceased, and having left him the residue of his
 estate. Mr. Firmin also built a ward for the sick,
 to prevent infecting the healthy and sound; if the
 small-pox, or other contagious distemper, should
 happen among the children, as it often doth.
 This ward cost 426*l*. 4*s*. besides 61. 5*s*. for a
 press; but the gentleman that gave the money
 for both, would not then be known; and conti-
 nues still of the same mind. I find, however, an
 account in Mr. Firmin's books of 1,537*l*. (the
 sick ward included) received, and laid out, by
 Mr. Firmin: and another account of 704*l*. 10*d*.
 received, with the names of the persons who gave
 it, and the uses for which it was given. In the
 year

year of our lord 1675, our friend built two houses for the two beadles, or other officers, of the hospital, at his own charge; of which I have a certificate, under the clerk's hand, in these words: " At his own proper cost and charges, Mr. Firmin set up a clock and dial, for the use of the hospital, at the top of the north-end of the great hall. The said Mr. Firmin built two new brick houses in the town-ditch, one at the south-west end, the other at the north-east, to be disposed to such officers, as the government of the hospital should think fit. Farther, at his own cost and charge, a shed, or little room, at the east-end of the late bowling-alley; and a new brick wall. He repaired all the walls, and levelled the ground."

At the charge of a friend of his, a citizen, he laid leaden pipes to convey the water to the several offices of the hospital; and bought them a large cistern; which in all cost about 200l. These were great conveniences to the house, for the orphans, (who before fetched up the water they used on their backs, which agreed not well with their strength,) kept the house foul, and prejudiced their clothes. Out of town he built a school, with all conveniences to it, for the hospital children; this he set up at Hertford, where many of the hospital children are boarded: the school cost 544l. 13s. of which he received, by the charity

of ten persons, the sum of 488l. the balance is 56l. 13s. which lies upon himself for any thing that appears. He was wont every lord's-day, at five in the evening, to see the orphans of the hospital at their evening service; at which time they prayed, and sung an anthem by select voices, the chorus by all the boys. After this, they sat down to supper, at the several tables, under the care of their matrons: here Mr. Firmin viewed them in their provisions, and in the behaviour both of them and their officers and attendants, commending, or admonishing, as there was occasion. To this sight he invited, one time or other, all his friends, whether of the town or country; and at last led them to the orphans' box, into which they would put somewhat, more or less, as they were charitably disposed. A countryman was very remarkable: for having seen the order and method of the hospital, when he came home, he made his will, and gave very considerably to the place. I was once with our friend at the hospital, when looking over the children's supper, which was pudding-pies, he took notice of a pie that seemed not of due bigness; he took it immediately into the kitchen, and weighed it himself; but it proved down-weight.

These cares did not so wholly employ this active man, but that he was also a great and good commonwealth's-man. He was always mindful of those

those who suffered for conscience, or for asserting the rights and liberties of the nation: and he printed a great many sheets, and some books, of that tendency and nature; great numbers of which he himself dispersed. When king James commanded the reading his declaration (for toleration and indulgence in religion) in the churches; a great number of well-written pamphlets were printed and dispersed, to convince people of the bad design of that specious declaration: Mr. Firmin was a principal encourager and promoter of those prints, which cost him considerable sums, as well for their publication as otherwise. He furthered, as much as in him lay, the heroical attempt of the prince of Orange, to rescue this nation from slavery and popery: and since his majesty has been seated on the throne, our friend has been particularly diligent in promoting the manufacture of the Lustring-company; because it is highly beneficial to this nation, and as prejudicial to our (then) enemy. He had the greatest hand, and used the most effectual endeavours, for procuring acts of parliament, and rules of court, in that behalf.

He and Mr. Renew took great pains, and were at much expence, to prevent correspondence with France, and the importation of silks, and other commodities, from thence. For this, they ran the hazard of their lives, from the revenge of mer-

chants and others, whom they prosecuted to execution. A merchant was so desperately angry at his detection, and the great damage he should unavoidably sustain thereby, that he went into a room alone, in a tavern, and ended his life by shooting himself in the head. The agents of Mr. Renew and Mr. Firmin gave either the first, or very early intelligence of the French invasion; which was to have been followed by the assassination of the king.

But he was not more a friend to the liberties of the nation, and to the present establishment, than he was an enemy to licentiousness. He was, from the first, a member of *The society for the reformation of manners*; he contributed to it by his advice, assistance, solicitations, as much as his leisure from the cares and endeavours (before mentioned and exemplified) would permit him: but his purse was always with them. He had such a zeal against needless swearing, whereby the religion of an oath grows vile and contemptible, and false-swearing becomes almost as common as idle and unnecessary swearing, to the indelible scandal of the christian name, and the great danger (even as far as life and estate) of particular persons: I say his zeal against common needless swearing, in what form soever, was so great, that in coffee-houses, or other places, where he overheard such swearing, he would immediately challenge the forfeiture

(appointed

(appointed by law) for the use of the poor; so that, in companies where he was frequent, an oath was seldom heard. But he raised the forfeiture according to the quality of the person; if a nobleman, or other person of distinction, or a clergyman, swore; they came not off at the ordinary forfeiture, appointed in the law, it was doubled or trebled upon them; especially if any such were very common swearers, or their oaths of a profane or impious sort. If any person refused to pay the forfeiture required, our friend would tell them, the forfeiture was to the poor, whose collector and steward he was: if still they refused to pay, their punishment (he told them) was, to be set down, by him, in the list of his *incorrigible swearers*; and that, for the future, he would not own them as his acquaintance, or speak to them as such. Divers noble persons would not endure this last; but would immediately condescend to pay the forfeiture, or promise payment, which he seldom remitted; particularly if they were often in that fault. As for himself, I never heard an oath from him in forty-four years (almost daily) conversation with him; though his temper was naturally quick and warm, and he had often great provocations to anger, one of the principal causes of rash and intemperate swearing.

But let us return to Mr. Firmin's charities. Nobody can have forgotten the great number of
Irish

Irish nobility, clergy, gentry, and others of all qualities, and both sexes, who fled into England from the persecution and proscriptions of king James. A brief was granted to them, of which Mr. Firmin was one of the commissioners; but, besides that, the ministers, churchwardens, and collectors, of every parish in England, were to give account, by letter, to Mr. Firmin, what sums they had collected, and paid to the archdeacons. Therefore, on many post-days, several hundred letters came to his hand, for a long time: and many of the collected sums were sent to him, and by him paid into the chamber of London: the money given by the king and queen was wholly, in a manner, solicited and received by him. The numbers and necessities of these refugees required a second brief: the sum total (paid to these two briefs) that went through Mr. Firmin's hands, was fifty-six thousand five hundred sixty-six pounds, seven shillings, and sixpence. The distribution of the money, gathered on these briefs, was by a certain number of the commissioners; but Mr. Firmin was the most constant man at their meetings: sometimes he attended the distribution from morning to night, without intermission for food. But, besides the sums paid into the chamber, and distributed as aforesaid, I am assured our friend solicited, and gave many private sums to particular persons, whose quality made them ashamed

to take of the common stock, or whose necessities required more than (without giving offence) could be allowed out of it. When by the mercy of God, and the magnanimity of the king, Ireland was reduced, and the protestants might now return to their houses, employs, and estates, Mr. Firmin doubled his industry and diligence to furnish them for their journey; because thereby he not only served them, but eased the nation, especially the better (that is, the charitable) part of it. He obtained great sums for this purpose; sir Thomas Cook (to whom I think it a debt to name him) gave fifteen hundred pounds to this service, apprehending it a charity to England, as well as to the poor sufferers. See here a letter from the most reverend the archbishop of Tuam, and seven others; all of them, I think, bishops of that kingdom; I am sure most of them are.

TO MR. THOMAS FIRMIN.

SIR,

BEING occasionally met together at Dublin, on a public account; and often discoursing of the great relief, which the protestants of this kingdom found among their brethren in England, in the time of our late miseries; we cannot treat the subject without as frequent mention of your name, who so chearfully and entirely devoted yourself to
that

that ministry. We consider, with all thankfulness, how much the public charity was improved by your industry; and we are witnesses of your indefatigable pains and faithfulness in the distribution; by which many thousands were preserved from perishing. We know also, that some who refused to take out of the common stock, as being desirous to cut off occasion of murmurs, were, however, by your mediation, comfortably subsisted by private benevolences. We doubt not, but you and they have the earnest of your reward in the peace of your minds; which we pray God to fill with comforts, and illuminate with his truths; making his grace to abound in them, who have abounded in their charity to others. And we intreat, that you, and all such as you know to have had their parts in this service, would believe, that we shall ever retain a grateful remembrance of it; as some testimony whereof, we desire you, for yourself in particular, to receive this acknowledgement of your kindness to our brethren, and therein to

Your much obliged

and most humble servants,

Jo. Tuam,

W. Clonfert,

N. Waterford,

Bar. Fernleigh,

R. Clogher,

S. Elpin,

W. Raphoe.

Edw. Cork and Ross,

Certainly

Certainly, a letter very worthy of their episcopal character ; and which I have inserted in these memoirs, as much out of regard and reverence to them, as for the sake of Mr. Firmin.

In April, 1693, Mr. Firmin entered upon part of the care of another hospital, that of St. Thomas, in Southwark ; a foundation intended for the relief of all sorts of lame, or wounded, or sick persons, till they are recovered by the application of proper medicines, and other means, and by the service of the physicians and surgeons of the hospital. Sir Robert Clayton (now father of the city of London) being, upon the decease of Sir John Lawrence, chosen president of this hospital, thought fit to accept of that province : but upon view of it, he took notice that it was greatly gone to ruin, the ground about the lodgings in a long tract of time raised so high, that the patients lay as it were in a cellar, without the benefit of air or good scent, but close and noisome : and the roof and walls so out of repair, that the poor patients oft-times could not lie dry in their beds. He saw the greater part of it must be rebuilt, it could not be repaired ; and that the rebuilding could not be delayed without great danger and damage to the place, whereof some part prevented the workmen's pulling it down, by falling of it self : therefore, knowing well his friend Mr. Firmin's activity, and good address, in works of that nature,

nature, he caused him to be chosen one of the governors of that hospital. He was chosen in April; and finding that the revenues of the hospital would go but a little way in the rebuildings or repairs, and besides could not be well spared from the supply of the wounded and sick; in July he provided three round boxes, in each of them a parchment, one for subscriptions of one hundred pounds, the second for subscriptions of fifty pounds, the third for twenty-five or twenty pounds subscriptions. The president was pleased to subscribe three hundred pounds, and other governors were liberal; so were divers merchants, and other rich traders; that the whole subscription was not much short of four thousand pounds. Without doubt, the greatest part of this money would have been subscribed, though Mr. Firmin had not been the solicitor for it: yet I reckon, and am supported in my computation by knowing and equal judges, that the subscription was greater by a thousand pounds, than it would have been if Mr. Firmin had not been concerned in procuring and improving the subscriptions. A prospect of the charge being taken, and some money (near four thousand pounds) toward it procured; materials must also be provided; and workmen consulted and agreed with. Mr. Firmin was constant in the committee appointed for that matter. I took notice, that the master-builders made their most frequent

frequent application to him; and he was as careful to oversee their proceedings. Several of the wards for the patients are now finished; besides a spacious hall, supported by pillars, which make a very handsome piazza. It troubled the governors very much, that they were obliged to rebuild the church of that parish, which would cost some thousands of pounds, that could not be taken out of the revenue of the hospital, without great prejudice to the house and patients. It happened that the parliament were then about settling a tax for finishing St. Paul's church, in London; so the governors of St. Thomas's hospital petitioned the house of commons to have some share in that tax toward the rebuilding their church: but because many other parishes prayed the like assistance at the same time, the house, upon a debate in a grand committee, resolved, that only St. Paul's and Westminster-abbey churches should have any such provision allowed to them. Mr. Firmin hereupon came home, not a little heavy: but he, and another of the governors, put into writing (that very night) some reasons, why St. Thomas's church might better claim some favour of the honourable house, than other ordinary churches. They used such diligence as to get their paper printed against the next morning. Mr. Firmin and his associate gave copies of it to the members as they entered the house; telling them, they must not expect to

have any sick or wounded seamen cured, if they did not grant something towards the rebuilding of that church. The effect was, that the house took the matter again into consideration, and allowed three thousand pounds to the hospital for the use he desired: on which our friend came home with more pleasure and satisfaction, than if an estate of that value had fallen to himself.

Among his other charities, he was not unmindful of those that suffered by fire, but would immediately apply himself to them for their present relief: afterwards, he assisted them in soliciting their briefs, and in managing their briefs (when obtained) to the best advantage. He often lent money to honest persons, to answer sudden emergencies or distresses; but he lost so much this way, that he was forced, at last, resolutely to forbear lending: but, instead of lending, he would many times give some part of what they desired to borrow.

He put very many boys to apprenticeships, and contributed to the setting them up, if they had served their apprenticeships faithfully and diligently. He has told me, that the clergy of London, and other dignified persons in the church, often enabled him in this kind of charity: he said, he had put many boys out with the money of some of the richer clergy; who considered this (he thought) as a sort of charity that extends to the person's whole life,

life, and might be the ground of many charities in time to come.

It deserves, in my opinion, to be reckoned among his charities, that when (some two or three years since) there was a great scarcity of current coin, all the money in England being either clipped, or debased by mixture of coarse metals, he lessened his expence by laying down his coach, that he might be the more able to continue his former charities, at a time when they were more needful than ever.

I have now accounted for the general endeavours and performances of Mr. Firmin's life: the particulars, to each general head, were too numerous to be reckoned up, without tiring the reader, if not also the writer. We have therefore taken only a short view of a person, of middle extraction, and slender beginnings, who raised himself to the honour of a very great number of illustrious friendships, and to an affluence of worldly wealth, which, when he had attained, by industry, integrity, and worth, like our saviour, *he went about doing good.* Nay, like the same saviour, *he became poor, that, through his poverty, others might be rich.* A person, who, in respect of his endeavours in all kinds of charity, may deservedly be called *the father of the poor*; in respect of the Irish and French refugees, *the almoner of England.* The divine hand had quali-

sted him to do much good; himself sought out the objects and occasions for it, and delighted in the doing. He did it with so much diligence and application, that he might even have said, with our saviour, *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me; and to finish his works*; i. e. the works that he hath commanded. (John iv. 34.)

The jesuit that assisted the late famous marshal Luxembourg in his last hours, thought he might put this question to him: "Well, sir, tell me, had you not rather, now, have given one alms to a poor man, in his distress, for God's sake, than have won so many victories in the field of battle?" The marshal confessed he should now choose the former; seeing nothing will avail any man, in the eternal world, but only the actions of charity, or of justice and piety. The confessor doth not seem to have been impertinent in the question; for, in our serious last hours, we shall all be sensible, and forward to confess, that we were wise only in that part of our life that was laid out in the duties either of humanity to men, or piety to God. The Crassi and Croesi, the Hannibals and Luxemburghs, the most conspicuous for wealth, or military glory, how gladly would they now give all that tinsel, for some part of our Firmin's sweat and drudgeries for the poor, and for the deserving? Is it for want of faith, or of consideration, that we so much more delight to
read

read the acts of the Alexanders, the Charlemaigns, and other false heroes, than of persons that have been exemplary for justice, beneficence, or devotion; and are now triumphant in heaven, on the account of those services to God, and to men? But so it is, either because we *are not christians*, or because we *are fools*; we are (commonly speaking) better pleased with the sons of earth, than of heaven.

I have read somewhere, (but so long since, that I forget the author's name, and the subject of his book,) that the punishment of Judas, who betrayed our saviour, is, that he stands on the surface of a swelling dreadful sea, with his feet somewhat below the water, as if he were about to sink. The writer saith, besides his continual horror and fear of going to the bottom, a most terrible tempest of hail and wind always beats on the traitor's naked body and head: he suffers as much by cold, and the smart of the impetuous hail, as it is possible to imagine he could suffer by the fire of purgatory, or of hell. But, saith my author further, in this so great distress, Judas has one very great comfort and relief; for whereas the tempest would be insupportable, if it beat always upon him from all sides; at a little distance from him, and somewhat above him, there is stretched out a sheet of strong coarse linen cloth, which sheet intercepts a great part of the tempest. Judas

regales himself by turning sometimes one side, sometimes another side, of his head and body, to the shelter of this sheet. In short, the sheet is such a protection to him, that it defends him from the one half of his punishment. But by what meritorious action, or actions, did Judas deserve so great a favour? Our author answers, he gave just the same quantity of linen-cloth to a certain poor family, for shirting. It had been impossible that this gentleman should hit on such a conceit as this, but from our natural opinion of the value and merit of charity; it seems to us a virtue so excellent, that it may excuse even Judas from some part of his punishment. I can hardly afford to ask the reader's pardon for this tale; I incline to think, that divers others may be as well pleased with the wit of it, and the moral implied in it, as I have been, who remember it after above forty years reading, without remembering either the author, or argument of the book.

I return once more to our dear Firmin, to take leave of him for ever. He had very much weakened his (otherwise) strong and firm constitution, by his manifold charitable employments, &c. having been sometimes liable to the jaundice, often afflicted with cholics, and scarce ever without a cough; his lungs had long been phthysical. He would often return home so tired and depressed in his spirits, that his pulse was scarce to be felt,

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or very languid: he would then take a little rest in his chair, and start up from it, and appear very vigorous in company, especially where any good was to be done. The more immediate cause of his death was a fever which seized his spirits, beginning with a chillness and shivering, and then a heat ensued. He was, at the same time, afflicted both in his lungs with a great shortness of breath, not having strength to expectorate, and also with such terrible pains in his bowels, that for many hours nothing could be made to pass him. He had for many years been troubled with a large rupture. All which made his sickness very short. He had wished, in his life-time, that he might not lie above two days on his last sick-bed; God granted to him his desire; he lay not so long by eight hours; and December 20, about two of the clock in the morning, anno 1697, he died.

During his last illness, he was visited by his most dear friend, the bishop of Gloucester. What passed between them, his lordship hath made me to know, under his own hand, in these words: *Mr. Firmin told me he was now going: and I trust, said he, God will not condemn me to worse company than I have loved, and used, in the present life. I replied, That he had been an extraordinary example of charity; the poor had a wonderful blessing in you: I doubt not, these works will follow you, if you have no expectation from the*
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the merit of them; but rely on the infinite goodness of God, and the merits of our saviour. Here he answered, I do so: and I say, in the words of my saviour, When I have done all, I am but an unprofitable servant. He was in such an agony of body, for want of breath, that I did not think fit to speak more to him, but only give him assurance of my earnest prayers for him, while he remained in this world. Then I took solemn and affectionate farewell of him; and he of me.

It is usual to conclude Lives with a character of the persons, both as to their bodies, and the qualities of their minds: therefore I must further add: Mr. Firmin was of a low stature, well proportioned; his complexion fair and bright; his eye and countenance lively; his aspect manly, and promising somewhat extraordinary; you would readily take him for a man of good sense, worth, and dignity. Walking or sitting he appeared more comely than standing still; for his mien and action gave a gracefulness to his person.

The endowments, inclinations, and qualities of his mind, may be best judged of by the account we have given of his life. It appears, he was quick of apprehension, and dispatch, and yet almost indefatigably industrious; properties that very rarely meet in the same man. He was, besides, inquisitive, and very ingenious; that is, he had a thirst of knowing much; and his fine and mercurial

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wit enabled him to acquire a large knowledge, with little labour; but he was utterly against subtilties in religion. He could not dissemble; on the contrary, you might easily perceive his love or anger, his liking or dislike: I have thought, in both these respects, he was rather too open; but both are the effects of sincerity, and arguments of an honest mind. He never affected proudly the respects of others, whether above or below him: with which I was the better satisfied, because it follows, that his charities proceeded not from any affectation of honour, or glory, among men; but from the love of God, and his afflicted brother. He was facetious enough, but without affecting it; for he valued (what indeed himself excelled in) judgment, rather than wit. He was neither presuming nor over-bold, nor yet timorous; a little prone to anger, but never excessive in it, either as to measure or time: which affections, whether you say of the body or mind, occasion great uneasiness, and sometimes great calamities and mischiefs, to persons who are governed by those passions. If the mind is turbulent by strong passions of any sort, the life is seldom serene and calm, but vexed with great griefs and misadventure. His manner of conversing was agreeable; so that seldom any broke friendship with him. Being well assured in himself of his own integrity, he could even unconcernedly hear that this or that

that man spoke ill of him. When I told him of that infamous story of the impudent coffee-man; which had been broached six or seven years before, had he not been over-persuaded, he would not have taken any notice of him: yet was more concerned at Mr. B.'s printing it, than at the other fellow's inventing it; not from the least consciousness of guilt, but that he should be so unchristianly used by a minister of the gospel, who too rashly took up the story against him. Which shews what strange things may be done under pretence of a zeal for religion.

My lady Clayton has so great a respect for his memory, that she has (with the concurrence of sir Robert), since his death, erected a handsome monument in their garden, at Marden, in Surry, in a walk there, called Mr. Firmin's walk, by reason of his contrivance and activity in it. This monument is a marble pillar, about eight feet high, with an urn, and flowers growing out of the top of it, with this motto, *Florescit funere virtus*; an emblem, you may conceive, of death and resurrection. There is also a marble table fixed to one side of this pillar, with the inscription following.

TO

TO PERPETUATE (AS FAR AS MARBLE AND LOVE CAN DO IT) THE MEMORY OF THOMAS FIRMIN, CITIZEN OF LONDON.

None ever passed the several periods of human life more irreproachably, or performed the common duties of society with greater sincerity and approbation. Though it appears, by his public spirit, that he thought himself born rather for the benefit of others, than his own private advantage; yet the satisfaction of doing good, and the universal esteem of honest men, made him the happiest person in the world. But his charity (which was not confined to any nation, sect, or party) is most worthy thy imitation, at least in some degree, O reader. He was as liberal of his own, as faithful in distributing the pious donations of others, whom he successfully persuaded to relieve the distressed, particularly the laborious poor: for of vagrant, idle, and insolent beggars, he was no advocate nor encourager. His agreeable temper rendering him an extraordinary lover of gardens, he contrived this walk, which bears his name, and where his improving conversation and example are still remembered. But since heaven has better disposed of him, this pillar is erected to charity and friendship by sir Robert Clayton, and Martha his lady, who first builded and planted in Marden.

Born at Ipswich, in Suffolk.

Buried in Christ-church hospital, London.

I have

I have now answered the demand of divers, as well strangers as friends, of writing and publishing some account of Mr. Firmin's life and death: I hope the well-minded reader will find much in it, that may both confirm and strengthen him in the best ways, especially in humanity and charity. He may see here, how much beneficence a good man, of but indifferent estate, is capable of exercising, by means of acquaintance and conversation with well-chosen friends, whom he may excite, by his example and solicitations, to be highly useful in their generation; and thereby be himself incomparably more useful, than otherwise he could be. But if I am less successful in that part of my design, than I wish to be; yet I have much eased my own mind, by paying some part of the debt that I owe to the memory of our friend. The rest I shall be always paying, by a grateful and mournful sense of the public and my own loss and benefit by him, when present, and as now deceased.

I cannot better conclude these short memoirs, than in the words of a letter, written to the author of the ensuing sermon, by a person of great worth; and who, from the time that they became acquainted, enabled Mr. Firmin to do many of those great services to the public, the deserving, and the poor, for which he was so highly commendable.

“ Sir,

" Sir,

" I received your letter of February 16, and
 " therewith the parentation to our valuable friend
 " Mr. Thomas Firmin; that man of so extraor-
 " dinary affections, and abilities, for the great
 " works of charity and piety. May it please the
 " divine providence to raise up to us adequate suc-
 " cessors. In the mean time, what an abate-
 " ment of sorrow is it to us, that He who alone is
 " absolutely good and all-powerful, lives for ever ?
 " —I am your affectionate and assured friend,

" BR. PR."

He had often signified his desire to be buried in Christ-church-hospital, when dead, the care of which had been so much upon his heart while living. In compliance with which desire, his relatives have interred him in the cloysters there, and placed, in the wall adjoining, a marble to his memory, with this inscription, viz.

Under that stone, near this place, lyeth the body of Thomas Firmin, late citizen of London, a governor of this and saint Thomas's hospital; who, by the grace of God, was created in Christ Jesus good works, wherein he was indefatigably industrious, and successfully provoked many others thereto; becoming also their almoner, visiting and relieving the poor at their houses; and in prisons, whence

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also he redeemed many. He set many hundreds of them at work, to the expending of great stocks: He rebuilt, repaired, and added conveniencies to hospitals, weekly over-seeing the orphans. The refugees from France and from Ireland, have partaken largely the effects of his charity, pains, and earnest solicitations for them. He was wonderfully zealous in every good work, beyond the example of any in our age. Thus shewed he his faith by his works, and cannot reasonably be reproached for that which brought forth such plenty of good fruits.

He died December xx. 1697, and in the 66th year of his age.

T H E E N D.

A S E R M O N,
ON LUKE X. 36, 37.
OCCASIONED BY THE
D E A T H
O F
MR. THOMAS FIRMIN;
A N D
PREACHED IN THE COUNTRY.

A. L. R. M. O. M.

ON THE 10th

ORGANIZED BY THE

D. E. A. T. H.

DO

MR. THOMAS T. R. M. M.

AND

THE BOARD OF THE

23

A S E R M O N,

ON LUKE X. 36, 37.

WHICH OF THESE THREE, THINKEST THOU, WAS NEIGHBOUR TO HIM THAT FELL AMONG THE THIEVES? HE ANSWERED, HE THAT SHEWED MERCY ON HIM. THEN SAID JESUS, GO, AND DO THOU LIKEWISE.

OUR saviour is talking here with a learned jew; one of the questions between them, as we are taught by another evangelist, was, which is the great, or chief, commandment of God's law? It is an inquiry not altogether needless, for it happens sometimes, that there is a clash, as they speak, of laws; if you will keep one law, you must break another. For instance, one law said; *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy; in it thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, or thy son, or daughter.* But the law at Gen. xvii. 12. says, *He that is eight days old shall be circumcised.* And the law at Numbers xxviii. 3, 9. *This is the offering to be made by fire;—two lambs without spot, day by day, the one in morning, the other in the evening: but on the sabbath two lambs.* Every one sees these laws would

often clash with one another ; in keeping one the other must be neglected. If your child happen to be *eight days old* on the sabbath-day, either you violate the sabbath by *the work* of circumcision ; or, out of regard to the law of the sabbath, you must transgress the law of circumcising on the eighth day. In like manner, if you keep the sabbath, as the law of the fourth commandment requires, by doing therein *no manner* of work ; you could not obey the law about the burnt-offering or sacrifice, that was to be made in the temple of God twice every day : namely, two lambs to *be killed*, their skins drawn off, and their bodies burnt on the altar, every morning, and every evening. It is in consideration of this that our saviour says, (*Matth. xii. 5.*) *Have ye not read, how, on the sabbath days, the priests do profane the sabbath, and yet are blameless ?* His meaning is, though the priests do break the law of the sabbath, which saith, *Thou shalt do no manner of work on the sabbaths* ; yet they are blameless herein, because at the same time they obey another law, which saith, *They shall offer the appointed sacrifices every morning and evening.* A great number of such like cases happening every day ; cases, wherein, by observing one law of God, you could not avoid to omit another : therefore, it was very requisite to determine which of God's laws were chief laws ; or were to be observed.

observed in a clash with another law (or laws) of God.

The jewish rabbies had established some rules, that were of great authority among the more zealous of their nation, for directing men's practice in doubts of this nature; yet so, that divers cases were left undecided, and many questions were debated warmly enough among them. They could not agree in resolving *this* question, Which is the great or chief law *of all*? Some said, the law of *the sabbath*, or fourth commandment, is the principal of all the divine laws; for two reasons. It is that law, or appointment, by which our religion is preserved, and kept up; and that both as to the knowledge, and the practice of duty. And it was that law which was first given by God; no sooner had he made the world, than he blessed and sanctified the seventh day. (*Gen. ii. 2.*) *God ended the work which he had made, and rested on the seventh day; therefore he blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.* But other learned men of that nation denied that the sabbath is the chief commandment; giving this reason: because it must give place to *the work* of circumcision, and to *the work* of sacrificing. A child who is eight days old must be circumcised, though his eighth day shall happen on the sabbath; and the morning and evening sacrifice must be slain, and offered even on the sabbaths. Therefore these said, circumcision is the great law of all;

all; it being the sacrament, or sign, of the covenant between God and our nation. Him that is not circumcised, God doth not consider as an israelite, but as a pagan or heathen; as is plainly intimated in the texts that speak of circumcision. Lastly, some of their divines thought that the law of sacrifices must take place of all laws: for, not to sacrifice, was not to worship God; sacrificing being the only worship then appointed. And their sacrifices were the expiations, or atonements, for their sins, ordained and accepted by God. So that, not to sacrifice, was to stand guilty, before God, of all their sins. They were liable to his judgments, on account of their sins, till the atonement was made by the daily sacrifice.

These were their opinions, and the principal reasons of them. The jew, in our text, either not well satisfied with any of these answers; or, it may be, so well persuaded of one of them, that he imagined nothing could be said against it; put the question to our saviour: *Master*, says he, *I would know which of all the commandments is the chief?* To this our saviour immediately answers; I will tell thee: The first, or principal, commandment, thou shalt find it at Deut. vi. 4, 5. *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and might.* As who should say, the

the chief commandment is, that a man *believe and profess the unity of God*; and that we *love him*, with all our might, or soul. I have told thee, continues our saviour, which is the first great commandment; I will add what thou hast not asked, Which is the second, or next great law? Thou hast it at Lev. xix. 18. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. The jewish doctor was amazed at this answer by our saviour. He granted, presently, that it was true and certain in both parts of it. It is true, says he, that there is one God, and none other but he; and to love him with all the soul and strength, and one's neighbour as one's self; this is more and better than all sacrifices, the which are commonly supposed to be the chief commandment.

But their discourse still goes on. I am well satisfied, says the jew, which is the first great law; and which is the next to it: but whereas the second of these commandments says, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*; it may be a question, Who is my neighbour, whom I am to love (saith the commandment) as myself? Are my neighbours those of the vicinage, the next dwellers to me? or are they my whole town? or all those of the same country with me; even all jews? or are they my relations? For there are all these opinions of doctors on that text. Hear, says our saviour, what happened not long since in these parts,

parts, and it will serve for an answer to thy question. A jew was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho; in his way, a company of robbers came up to him; they took from him his money, and even his clothes; and having wounded him dangerously, left him for dead. Shortly comes that way a levite, and, but little after him, a priest; both these, seeing a naked body, covered with blood, kept at a distance, and passed on. In the mean time, the wounded man lay as dead; and, while he so lay, there came by also a samaritan. The samaritans, you know, are of another nation, and different religion, from us jews: for all that, he made no difficulty of coming to, and viewing the wounded jew. He imagined there might be life still left in him: and therefore, first covering him with a part of his own garments, he began to cleanse and dress his wounds. Upon this, the signs of life soon appeared, the wounded man revived, and by help of this charitable stranger was brought to an inn. But, alas! what shall he do? wounded, naked, and without money, he was still in a forlorn, hopeless condition. The samaritan, aware that he had done nothing yet, if he did not go forward, calls for the landlord, or host. Friend, says he, I know not this man; but you know me: therefore, take care of him in all respects, his diet, clothes, and health; when I return, I will satisfy for all. To bind this promise and bargain,
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take these two denarii in way of earnest, before these witnesses. Now, says our saviour, thou that askest, Who is my neighbour? let me see whether thou canst not answer it of thyself? Was it the levite, or the priest, or was it the samaritan, that deserved to be accounted and called the neighbour? The jew was again overcome, and therefore replies, in the words of our present text: *He was the neighbour that shewed mercy.* Was he so? says our saviour again: *Then go, and do thou (ὡς αὐτός) in like manner; do so; do as thou hast said.* My meaning is, reckon him to be thy neighbour, whom thou hast but now confessed to be, in truth, the neighbour; even the man who is a doer of good. Though he should be, or she be, a samaritan, of a foreign nation, of a false religion; yet, if he is a lover of men, one that does good to others, account him thy neighbour, whom thou art to love as thyself.

This determination, or conclusion, by our saviour, was very contrary to the humour and practice of those times: for both the jews and the samaritans not only did not account of one another as neighbours, whom they should love as themselves, but they even hated and persecuted each the other. The jew would have no dealings with the samaritans; and the samaritan would not receive, or sell, even necessary provisions to the jews. (John iv. 9.) *Then said the woman of Samaria,*

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How is it, that thou, being a jew, askest drink of me, who am of Samaria? For the jews have no dealings with the samaritans. Again, (Luke ix. 52.) *Jesus sent messengers before him, who came to a village of the samaritans; but they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem; that is, The faces of Jesus and his company being toward Jerusalem, therefore the samaritans, supposing he was a jew, would not receive him into their inns.* So much can a bad example do, when it grows to be common; it will persuade men even against their honest and just profit: the very victuallers on a road shall deny entertainment to passengers of another religion, if example has made it customary to do despite to such persons.

The cause of so great aversion and displeasure between the samaritans and jews, was (as has been already hinted) difference of religion. The samaritans owned only the first five books of holy scripture, namely, the books written by Moses. As to the prophets, the books of Solomon, the psalms of David, Job, the books of Kings and Chronicles, Nehemiah, Ezra, Ruth, Esther: these they received not as *divine books*. There is no doubt that, in these matters, the samaritans were to blame, and were in the wrong; the jews had the advantage in all points that were controverted between them and the samaritans. Nay, farther,
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the samaritans mistook, even about the object of worship, GOD. Their notions or apprehensions of God seem to have been confused and uncertain. They are the words of our saviour, (John iv. 22.) *Ye (ye samaritans) know not what ye worship; we (we jews) know what we worship.* The error, then, of the samaritans, consisted not only in refusing divers books, belonging to the old Testament; but their conceptions or opinions concerning God were not clear, nor true. Ye know not, says our saviour, what ye worship; that is, ye know not God: some knowledge ye have of him, but ye know him not rightly: it is an obscure, confused, and, for the most part of it, a mistaken knowledge that ye have of him.

Of this nation, and of this religion, was the person whom our text so much commends. This is he of whom our saviour says here, he was the true neighbour; the person whom the law of God intends when it says, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* He was not a jew; that is, he was not of the *true church* of God. He owned but a small part of holy scripture, disowning the far greater part of the divine word. His knowledge of the object of worship, of God, was so imperfect, and uncertain, and confused, that our saviour himself pronounces, the men of that religion know not God. But, with all these infelicities, he was a doer of good, a lover of men;

adorned with beneficent, charitable principles: not carried away by the common and general example, whether of the samaritans or jews, to hate others merely for their religion; open-handed and well-affected to men, as men. Such a one, says our saviour in this text, is to be accounted a neighbour; he belongs to that charge and law of God, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. A levite or a priest, though he is the minister of God, most high, may less deserve the benefit of that law: he may not have so good a claim to it, as a man of a far country, and another religion; the good man, the doer of good, is that person who only can challenge it as his right, to be loved as ourselves.

Give me leave to make these few short remarks hereupon.

I. Our most blessed saviour prefers here the samaritan before the levite and the priest; the doer of good, before the man of right faith, or true opinions. The reason is, a man's faith, his right sect or way of religion, why, it is a desirable thing, a valuable felicity; but it does good to nobody, but the person himself. If I hold the true religion in all respects, so as not to mistake so much as in one point; What is the world, what is my neighbour, the better for my great and exact knowledge and skill? But if, like the samaritan in this text, I am a lover of men, a doer of good,

open-handed; or, if I cannot do so, yet open-hearted; a great many others, one time or other, shall be the better for this. We cannot reasonably wonder that God esteems a virtue which is useful to many, before a right faith, or true knowledge, which are not a common and general good, as the doing of good is.

I know well there are divers fash worldlings as have no relish for such discourses as these. They reckon, they have no need of any body, and that they are cunning enough never to lack other men's help. But so also all those have thought, who have most needed the assistance of others; those, for instance, who have become the subjects of briefs, letters of recommendation, and other forms of begging. All these, or most of them, said in their day of prosperity, "I shall never be moved: thou, Lord, of thy goodness, hast made my mountain to stand strong." Hear me, son of this world; Mayest not thou, like the man of this text, fall among thieves? May not they, (the thieves,) rob thee, wound thee, and leave thee for dead? Certainly this may happen to you, and so may a hundred other, as unexpected, unlooked-for accidents; so that were there no samaritans, none that cared at any time for any but themselves, the uncertain world we live in would be a dangerous place; and the worldling might as soon find it such as any other man. They will

say, such accidents fall out so seldom, that we need not to change our ordinary course, for fear of such things. But in very deed they happen oftener, and to worldlings, than they have good consideration enough to think of and lay to heart. Alas, it is almost every day, and in every place, that we fall among thieves; that rob us, and that almost quite strip us, if also they do not wound us. Not seldom, the times are thieves to us; other-while the wife, or prodigal children. A knavish kindred, false servants, grinding masters, a litigious or envious neighbourhood, sometimes rob us, and send us away naked, or next to naked, even bare and necessitous. The rich themselves too often experience the straits to which these sorts of thieves do reduce men; they make the rich to be poor in the midst of the greatest abundance and plenty: so that certainly it were to be wished there were more samaritans, more well-conditioned, well-disposed, and open-hearted persons.

2. Again, I take notice; it is not indeed in every one's power to do as this samaritan, to relieve the poor or distressed in their wants, or to encourage the worthy and deserving in their excellent endeavours. But though few of us have the samaritan's purse, all may and should have his spirit. We can all of us countenance and be of party with the well-deserving; and the poor we can all of us help by our counsel, favour, good looks,

looks, and good words. There is no commandment of God but all persons may earn the recompence that belongs to it; for all of us can perform it, either in act, or by approving, applauding, and favouring it. I make the deed of this Samaritan, nay, all the best deeds of all other public-spirited, well-disposed men, to be mine; if, wanting their wealth, or their opportunities, *I esteem their persons for their actions, the men for what they do, or have done.* As, on the contrary, but too many do make the lust, debaucheries, and other vices, of their friends, or strangers, to be their own; in that they love or esteem the persons on those very accounts. You shall hear them telling with great pleasure, with many approving smiles, the wicked or lewd deeds of some others; especially when the wickedness has a mixture either of wit, or seeming bravery and courage. The first beginnings of excellent virtue, of whatsoever kind, are (usually) in our approbation of those kind of actions: when we have used some time to make them ours by our good-liking and esteem of them, we grow such ourselves, before we are well aware of it: I mean, grow such in spirit, in inclination; though opportunity or ability of acting accordingly may be wanting.

The inclination, the spirit, is accepted by God, no less than the act or performance. This is the peculiar advantage of God's service; it is not

found in the service of any other whomsoever; that the inclination of the mind goes for the act itself, and that God recompences the well-disposed, as the well-doer. In short, this is our privilege and our comfort, as christians; we may all be samaritans, without the parse of the samaritan, or his opportunities.

3. Not the levite, not the priest, says our saviour here, but the samaritan, the doer of good, is that neighbour, whom by God's law thou art to love as thyself. It is true, the samaritan is of another religion; he is so overseen, as not to own some books that are genuine parts of holy scripture: nay, he has great mistakes about the very object of worship, about the very person of God; his conceptions of God are so confused and uncertain, that he worships he knows not (well) what. For all that, I say to thee, seeing he is an useful man, full of good works, thou art to love him as thyself; his strange country, or his mistaken religion, notwithstanding. Nobody will deny, that this is our saviour's plain meaning in this text, and the context. But if so, why is it the practice of so many, to be disaffected to the very best persons, for their (supposed) errors in religion? How dare we to contravene, go against, the undeniable charge given to us all in this plain text? The man, say you, is a samaritan; in our judgment he is mistaken in some points of religion;

it may be about the very object of worship; the nature and the properties of God. I pray, christians, think of it, that it is our saviour who supposes that the person is indeed a samaritan: he tells us plainly he is of a different religion from the true church, and even that he worships he knows not what: yet, after all, the same saviour says, decrees, this is thy neighbour, whom thou art to love as thyself; because, says he, he is a doer of good, open-hearted, well-conditioned. I will have thee (says that teacher, *whom we are to hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto us*) to embrace this samaritan; to think him worthy of more love than the orthodox levite or priest, found in the faith.

But here, what say some men? What, embrace a samaritan, a heretic, a man of false religion? We have learned better things, and that from holy scripture, from the word of God itself. (Titus iii. 10.) "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject;" that is, cast him off, have nothing to do with him, avoid him as a pest. It is too common, among the contending parties of christians, to take scripture words and names; and, having put them on the wrong person or subject, to conclude presently, we have confuted, and shamed them. A heretic, says the apostle, reject him, cast him off. Right! but then let us mean by heretics what he means.

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He means factious persons, whether they be of a right or a wrong opinion in religion. To say it in few words, heresy is bigotry or faction; and heretic is a bigot, a factious or turbulent person, whether such person happens to be right or wrong in his opinions. *Hereses sunt placita vehementius defensa*, says a most learned critic: "Heresy is any opinion, whether in philosophy, religion, or politics, for which men contend too earnestly and fiercely." It is not then the truth or falsehood of any opinion that makes it to be heresy, and the person that holds it a heretic; it is the stir, clamour, and bustle made about it by any, that makes the opinion heresy, and the man a heretic: concerning such men the apostle directs well, *reject them*; after having admonished them once and again of their dangerous warmth, avoid them, have no more to do with them. But as for others who are mistaken, (that is, we think they are mistaken in their doctrines,) the charge concerning them is, not *reject them*, or avoid them. On the contrary, we are cautioned *not to judge them*, not to *condemn them*; and for this reason, because they erring conscientiously, *God receives them, God accepts them, God will uphold them*. (Rom. xiv. 4.) "Who art thou that judgest (ἀλλότριον δικάζων,) the servant of another? To his own master, to God, he must stand or fall; yea, he shall be holden up." He had

had said in the foregoing verse, (*προσηλθὼν αὐτῷ ὁ Θεός,*) *God hath accepted him, or God hath received him.*

In short, they say, a *heretic* is to be rejected. I answer, yes, every *bigot*, every turbulent person, every fire-brand, of whatsoever sect or persuasion. But for heretics, that are commonly so miscalled, (that is, persons erring in doctrine,) it will but ill become us to *reject them*, when the holy scriptures assure us in express terms *God accepts them.*

4. Lastly, As the divine wisdom and goodness has made it to be our duty, to love the doer of good as ourselves; so, in dispensing his last sentence, and the everlasting recompences, himself will consider, not what the opinions of men have been, but what good they have done to other men. When our saviour describes that general judgment in which all men shall receive their last and irrevocable doom, shall be adjudged by God, either to happiness or misery: he assures us, the reason of both these shall be grounded, by the most holy judge, on our forwardness and frequency in doing good to others, or (on the contrary) our neglect thereof. The manner and reasons of that judgment are very particularly stated in the gospel by St. Matthew, (chap. xxv.) to this effect or sense: When the son of man is descended from the highest heavens, *in the glory of the Father*; which is to say, waited

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on by a glistering, triumphant train of angels and
 seraphims; they will present to him *the throne of
 glory*, the tribunal or judgment-seat of the whole
 world. So soon as he is seated thereon, the earth
 and sea giving up their dead, there will *be gathered
 before him all nations*; the men of all countries,
 of all ages, since the first creation of things; of
 all conditions, states, or degrees; and especially
 of all religions. Never before and never again
 will there be such an assembly; the first parents
 of all mankind, the particular progenitors (or pa-
 triarchs) of the several nations, all the great per-
 sonages, whether for dignity, wisdom, wealth, wit,
 arts, or success, that have ever been. All these
 mingled with the promiscuous, plebeian crowd,
 and, not less than they, under the most mortifying
 doubts and fears, what shall become of them.
 The judge, unmoved, declares, in the first place,
 that all their former distinctions are now to
 cease; he will consider them but only as sheep or
 goats, as good or bad. All your other differences,
 says he, were intended only as trials, or as oppor-
 tunities; trials what you would deserve, or op-
 portunities of doing well or doing ill. They
 were only to prepare you for this day, and this
 judgment; to make you capable subjects of God's
 everlasting love, and the beatitudes consequent
 thereon; or else objects of justice, for your neg-
 lects of duty, and abuses of the power, wealth,
 and

and talents, that were trusted to your management. This is no sooner said, than ministering angels separate the one from the other; in the language there used, they divide the sheep from the goats; persons that have been innocent and useful, from the wily and harmful. Then follows the sacred irreversible sentence: you that have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, relieved the prisons and sick families; in short, you that *have shown mercy* by exercising any sort or kind of beneficence, are to *inherit everlasting mercy*, even the joys and kingdom that so well correspond to such actions and ways. But you on the other hand of me, that have done all things contrary, it is the will of God that you depart forthwith into that punishment, by fire, which God, all-wise and all-powerful, has thought you worthy of; and will so far support you, as to enable you to suffer it.

This is the purport and substance of that famous portion of holy scripture. I cannot stand now to make any other reflection upon it, than this, for which I alledged it: that when the men of all nations, which includes (and implies) the men of all faiths, shall be judged by our saviour, he will give sentence, he will make them miserable, or happy, on the foot of their good or bad deeds; their deeds of charity or other beneficence; without any respect to their opinions, to the doctrines

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they believed, or thought they had cause to deny or to doubt of.

In answer to this context, I have heard some men say: It is true, indeed, our saviour mentions there, only the doing good to others, as the cause of salvation; but it is certain, from a great many other texts, that justice or righteousness is also a necessary condition of salvation, and no less necessary than charity or beneficence, or doing good to others, is. Therefore, whereas our saviour (there) instances in beneficence, without speaking either of justice, or of a right faith: it was because beneficence is the principal, not because it is the only, condition of men's salvation. But I pray let us not so interpret scripture, as to destroy it. Our saviour says expressly, in that context, he will judge the men of all faiths, by their beneficence. Yes, say these (skilful and faithful) interpreters, he will judge them by their beneficence, and by their faiths. Plainly, this is not to interpret the divine word, but to add to it what and as we please.

But they say, other texts make justice a condition of salvation; therefore, beneficence cannot be the only ground of that sentence, which the judge of the world will at last pronounce. His sentence will be grounded on men's beneficence, on their justice, and right faith. A very little heed

heed would have prevented this objection; and the mistake that is tacked to it. For justice is included in beneficence, as a lesser number is in a greater: he that will do me good, will be sure to do me right; he that bestows on me what is his, will not defraud me of what is mine. In short, the beneficent person is always just: as a greater number always includes the lesser, beneficence always comprehends and implies justice. Our saviour, aware of this, did not think it necessary to make (there) express mention of justice; but only of beneficence, which (always and necessarily) implies and includes it. But, if a right faith had also been a necessary condition of salvation, it must have been expressly named; because it is not at all, in any degree, implied in beneficence, which is there proposed as the condition of salvation.

I have not said any thing, of all that has been said, with a design to depreciate, or lessen the esteem or value of a right faith. As it is a duty to be conscientious; to *try the spirits; to prove the doctrines, whether they be of God*; so we must needs grant, it is matter of (just) praise, with all good and wise men, and of acceptance with God, if our faith be right, as well as our works good. It is lawful, however, to compare even jewels, to judge not only of their intrinsic, but of their

relative worth; to examine not only what they are in themselves, but what is their value, in a comparison with one another. We may say the pearl is better than crystal, the sapphire than the cornelian, the diamond than the amethyst. And, in like manner, especially it being after our favour, we may affirm, that well-doing is preferable to the most dextrous or lucky thinking; it is better to be a good man, or a doer of good, than to be a learned or orthodox man.

I may err, and yet be saved: in the dark and intricate walks of controversy I may make false steps, without being (at all) the more out of my way to blessedness. But, if I am not a samaritan, a doer of good, either in fact or in inclination and spirit, I neither have a right to be loved by my neighbour, nor to be accepted by God. No, not though I be a son of the church, by an orthodox faith and doctrine; or even a father in the church, a priest or levite.

Thus, as well and fully as the time (allowed to these exercises) would permit, I have represented to you what encouragements God has proposed to well-doing, particularly to beneficence. I should now present you with one of the fairest examples thereof, that this age or any former could boast of, in an account and character of our deceased brother and friend, Mr. THOMAS FIRMIN;

MIN ; but that part of the respect that we owe to his memory, being performed to him by some others who knew him longer, and therefore can draw him more exactly, I will conclude with the doxology that is so just and so due.

*To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, God
only wise, be honour and glory, for ever
and ever. (1 Tim. i. 17.)*

THE END.